

July 25, 1960

Miss Abigail Van Buren  
The San Francisco Chronicle  
San Francisco, California

Dear Miss Van Buren:

Your letter of July 26 was given to me by Professor J. Lederberg. You ask whether the likelihood for normal offspring in consanguineous marriages is increased when there is no hereditary abnormality known in the common families. No quantitative answer to this question is still available, but the increase in favorable chances which can be obtained by the knowledge you mentioned is likely to be so small that I would not recommend using it to counterbalance other arguments against consanguineous marriage. Most hereditary abnormalities tend to remain concealed and the rarer ones are often revealed primarily in the progeny of such matings.

Yours sincerely,

L. L. Cavalli-Sforza  
Visiting Professor  
of Genetics